

## China, EU on Path of Expanding Cooperation in Outer Space

BERLIN - China's Chang'e-4 lunar probe was launched earlier this month, and it is expected to make the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the moon. During the mission, China has cooperated with four other countries, three of which are from Europe, an epitome of the increasing space cooperation between China and the European Union (EU) in recent years. The Chang'e-4 mission will be a key step in revealing the mysterious far side of the moon, most of which remains unknown. Germany's scientific payload is a "Lunar Lander Neutron and Dosimetry" instrument, developed by Kiel University, which aims to measure radiation on the moon, mainly for future manned missions there, also the water content beneath the landing unit,



said Robert Wimmer-Schweingruber, who is leading the research team. Karl Bergquist, the European Space Agency's (ESA) administrator for the International Relations Department, called the Chang'e-4 mission

scientifically and technologically "very impressive," because "no one has ever done it, this mission will therefore advance our knowledge of the moon." He also called the lunar mission "the first step towards future explorations far-

ther afield."

Stressing the difficulties of landing on the far side due to spacecraft controlling and signal relay, Wimmer-Schweingruber said that "the satellite is already in place. We're orbiting the moon right now. It has worked well."

Earlier, China has already launched a relay satellite "Queqiao," tasked with transmitting signals between Chang'e-4 and ground control.

Scientific tasks for Chang'e-4 also include low-frequency radio astronomical observation, surveying the terrain and landforms, as well as detecting the mineral composition and shallow lunar surface structure, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA). (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### Pakistan to Start Repayment of Loans from 2021: China

ISLAMABAD - China on Saturday said Pakistan will start repayment of loans from year 2021, and that it has to repay only \$6.017 billion concessional as well as interest-free loans and their interest to Beijing under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. "The Chinese government has provided concessional loans of \$5.874 billion for Pakistan government's major transportation infrastructure projects, with a composite interest rate of around 2% in repayment period of 20-25 years. The Pakistani government has provided sovereign guarantee for the above loans and will start the repayment from 2021," a statement issued by the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad

said. "The Chinese companies and their partners have invested an amount of \$12.8 billion in energy projects in Pakistan. Among those, Chinese companies have provided \$3 billion from their own equity. The rest \$9.8 billion is raised from commercial banks with interest rate of about 5%. The repayment period is 12-18 years," the statement said. "All the CPEC energy projects are investment in nature, which is purely an independent venture of these companies who are responsible for their own profits and losses and repayment of loans," it continued. "Pakistani government does not repay these loans under CPEC. (Daily Times)

### Lebanese Finance Minister Warns of Financial Crisis as Political Deadlock Continues

BEIRUT - Lebanon's finance minister has said the heavily indebted country is in a state of economic crisis and warned it faces becoming a financial crisis, as politicians struggle to form a new government, state media reported. Nearly eight months since parliamentary elections, Prime Minister-designate Saad al-Hariri has been unable to bring Lebanon's rival parties together into a national unity government that can deliver fiscal reform. "The repercussions and consequences

of the economic crisis today are at their highest. The crisis started to turn into a financial one," said Ali Hassan Khalil late on Saturday according to the state news agency NNA. "We hope it will not become a monetary crisis," he said. With the world's third-highest ratio of debt to GDP, Lebanon has endured years of weak economic growth and was urged by the International Monetary Fund this year to carry out "urgent" measures to put public finances back on a sustainable footing. (Reuters)

BERLIN - European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker on Sunday urged Britain to "get your act together" on Brexit, as he rejected accusations that the EU had a hidden agenda of keeping Britain in the bloc. "I find it unreasonable that part of the British public seems to think that it's entirely up to the EU to present a solution for all future British problems," Juncker told German newspaper Welt am Sonntag. "My call is: get your

### Juncker to Britain on Brexit: 'Get Your Act Together'

act together. And tell us what you want. Our proposals have been on the table for months." Earlier this month, British Prime Minister Theresa May postponed a vote in the House of Commons on the withdrawal deal she struck with the EU in November, fearing a huge defeat as many of her own MPs oppose it. She is seeking further clarifications from Brussels on arrangements relating to the Irish border, and has said the vote would take place



the week of January 14. It also means the parliamentary decision would come just weeks before Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29. The main opposition

Labour party has accused May of "running down the clock" to try to force MPs to back her deal rather than risk Britain leaving the EU with no arrangements in place. (AFP)

### Iranians Mark 2009 Rallies against Foreign-Backed 'Sedition'

TEHRAN - Iranians have taken to the streets to mark the anniversary of 2009 historic rallies, during which people renewed their allegiance to the Islamic establishment and put an end to foreign-orchestrated riots. On this day in 2009, millions of Iranians rallied in the capital Tehran and other cities to end what the Iranian authorities described as "sedition" which had been going on for months following presidential elections earlier that year. People were especially incensed by the incidents that occurred earlier in Tehran, where a group of rioters engaged in blaspheming Ashura, the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein, the third

Shia Imam. On Sunday, people from all walks of life took part in nationwide demonstrations to mark the "Dey 9 epic" which refers to the mass rallies held on the ninth day of the Persian calendar month of Dey. The unrest in 2009 was orchestrated by Mehdi Karroubi and Mir Hossein Musavi, two of the candidates who had lost the election, claiming that the results had been rigged. Both remain under house arrest on charges of provoking the public and harming the national security. Speaking on Sunday, Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani highlighted foreign meddling, especially by the US, in the 2009 post-election riots. (Press TV)

### Russian Army to Get New Missile Complex S-350 Vityaz in 2019



MOSCOW - Russia will in 2019 deploy the S-350 Vityaz new generation

short-to-mid range surface-to-air defence missile complex, the Russian

Defence Ministry said on Sunday, in a long-planned move to replace

its ageing S-300 system. The ministry also said that the Russian military had deployed Pantsir-S and S-400 complexes in 2018 in Crimea, annexed from Ukraine in 2014, as well as in its Arctic region, the Kaliningrad exclave on the Baltic Sea, and in its easternmost Khabarovsk region. Russia has been flexing its military muscles abroad in recent years, and its involvement in the Syrian conflict and Ukraine has soured relations with the West. (Reuters)

### Australia Strips Top IS Terror Suspect of Citizenship

SYDNEY - Australia has stripped the citizenship of its most-wanted Islamic State suspect Neil Prakash for being a member of the jihadist group, the 12th dual-national to lose their passport over terrorism links. Prakash -- a senior recruiter for IS who has been linked to terror plots to kill Australians -- is currently facing charges in Turkey of joining the organisation. The government in 2016 asked Ankara to extradite Prakash, who Canberra previously reported as having been killed in a US airstrike in northern Iraq. "I can confirm that the Australian government has notified Neil Prakash that his Australian citizenship has ceased due to being in the service of Islamic State," Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton said in a statement Saturday. "Cessation of Australian citizenship of dual nationals engaged in terrorist conduct offshore is a key part of Australia's response to international violent extremism and terrorism." (AFP)

### BBC Complains to Russia over Leaked Staff Data That Was 'Shared with Authorities'

MOSCOW - The BBC has gone out of its way to voice concern over the personal details of its staff in Russia appearing on social media and on a news site, not long after staying puzzlingly silent when UK media doxed Sputnik staff in the UK. A list featuring 44 names of BBC employees - with their pictures - published on a couple of Russian social media platforms and a news website did not sit well with the British broadcaster, which lamented "the groundless publication of our Moscow team's details" and then requested that Russian authorities investigate the matter. (Russia Today)

### Sacked Macron Bodyguard Defends Use of Diplomatic Passports

PARIS - Emmanuel Macron's former security aide, who was sacked this summer after his violent conduct fueled a political scandal, acknowledged on Sunday he was still traveling on a diplomatic passport, in an affair that has rattled the French presidency. After he was fired when a video emerged of his beating a May Day protester, Alexandre Benalla returned to the spotlight in France this week, under scrutiny over his recent consultancy work and unauthorized use of diplomatic passports. The original Benalla scandal became a major headache for Macron just over a year into his tenure, after the president, whose popularity ratings have since slipped, was criticized for acting too slowly in dealing with a member of his inner circle. (Reuters)

### N. Korean Leader Calls for More Talks with South in New Year

SEOUL, South Korea - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un sent a letter to South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Sunday calling for more peace talks between the leaders in the new year following their active engagement in 2018, South Korea's presidential office said. Moon's office said Kim also expressed regret that he couldn't make a planned visit to Seoul, South Korea's capital, by the end of December as pledged by the leaders during their last summit in September in Pyongyang, the North Korean capital. The Blue House didn't fully disclose Kim's letter.



Through three summits between Moon and Kim this year, the Koreans agreed to a variety of goodwill gestures and vowed to resume economic cooperation when possible, voicing optimism that international sanctions could end to allow such activity. The rivals have also taken

### With U.S. Departure, Syria's Manbij Braces for Upheaval

MANBIJ, Syria - The city of Manbij has switched control more than most places in Syria's civil war. With U.S. troops set to leave after President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw them, residents fear others will rush to fill the vacuum, causing more upheaval: Syrian government forces have deployed nearby while Turkey is threatening its own assault on the city.

U.S. forces have underpinned stability in Manbij since Islamic State's defeat here in 2016.

Some 30 km (20 miles) from the Turkish border, it occupies a critical spot in the map of the Syrian conflict, near the junction of three separate blocks of territory that form spheres of Russian, Turkish and - for now - U.S. influence. While U.S. forces have yet to leave, the consequences of Trump's decision are already playing out in Manbij. Russian-backed Syrian government forces entered the outskirts on Friday for the first time in years at the invitation of Kurdish YPG militia who fear the U.S. departure could open the way for a Turkish attack.

"We have been living in fear for the past few days and we don't know what is happening and who will enter the city," said Ismail Shaalan, 41, who has lived in Manbij since fleeing fighting in the Aleppo area two years ago. "Is it the Turks or the Syrians?" Trump has said the withdrawal will be slow. U.S.-led coalition jets and attack helicopters could still be seen in the skies over Manbij on Saturday. (Reuters)

### UN Calls Out Yemen's Houthi Rebels over Peace Gestures

SANAA, Yemen - The United Nations cast doubt Sunday on claims by Yemen's Shiite rebels to have withdrawn from the Red Sea port of Hodeida, saying such steps can only be credible if all other parties can verify them.

Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said the rebels, known as Houthis, also failed to honor an agreement to open a "humanitarian"

corridor between Hodeida and the capital, Sanaa, to deliver assistance. Both cities are under rebel control. He said retired Dutch Maj. Gen. Patrick Cammaert, who heads a U.N. team of monitors in Hodeida, has expressed his "disappointment at their missed opportunity to build confidence between the parties" in a meeting with rebel representatives about their failure to open the corridor. (Fox News)

### Pakistan's Logistics Market Reaches \$34.2bln

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's logistics market has reached \$34.2 billion with annual growth of 18 percent, a minister said on Saturday, while unveiling a plan for state-owned postal operator to enter into e-commerce business. Minister for Postal Services Murad Saeed said future initiatives of Pakistan Post would be compatible with the contemporary needs of existing times. "This would include an entry into the e-commerce business," Saeed said at a meeting.

The minister announced a pilot project for microfinance loan disbursement of Khushhali Bank through Pakistan Post. The project will be piloted by the first week of January and will formally be inaugurated by the mid of January. The meeting was told that Pakistan Post has the capacity and commitment to deliver for online vendors for their cash on delivery products with proof of delivery and prompt reconciliation of their payments. (Agencies)

### Iran to Support Palestinian Nation, Cause Until Complete Victory: FM Zarif

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the Islamic Republic will always stand by Palestinian people and support their cause. Zarif made the remarks in a meeting with Secretary General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement Ziad al-Nakhala in Tehran on Saturday.

The top Iranian diplomat emphasized that supporting Palestine was a fundamental principle of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. Back in May, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Palestine would finally be freed from the clutches of enemies and that Je-

rusalem al-Quds would be the capital of Palestinian state despite US attempts to distort this reality. "God willing, Palestine will be liberated from the grip of enemies and America and its stooges will not be able to a damn thing vis-à-vis truth and the divine tradition," the Leader said. In a meeting with a Palestinian parliamentary delegation led by senior Palestinian lawmaker Mahmoud al-Zahar in Tehran last week, Zarif once again reiterated the Islamic Republic's principled policy to support Palestine, urging all countries in the Muslim world to boost their unity to defend the Palestinian cause. (Press TV)